

Supporting Social Communication



Stage 3

Conversation skills

These activities are for your child if he/she –

- * Is able to express themselves in full sentences, but has difficulty understanding social cues
- * Has difficulty holding a conversation

The goal is to support your child succeed in a range of social situations. This requires a range of skills including –

- * Engaging in conversation
- * Understanding another's perspective
- * Understanding their own and others' feelings
- * Advocating for themselves

Barrier and guessing games

Barrier games are great because they give the child direct and tangible feedback about their communication, which supports self-reflection. All you need is something that requires instructions; you could use LEGO, building blocks, a recipe or a step-by-step drawing.

One person **gives the instructions** and the other person has to **listen** carefully and follow the instructions. You then swap roles. Encourage your child to also **ask questions** when they are in the listening role, e.g. "Is that right?", "What colour did you say?", "Can you repeat the last part?"

Guessing games are another brilliant way to encourage **asking and answering** questions. They also encourage inference skills and perspective taking. Write/draw an animal, food or object on a post-it and stick it onto your forehead. Take turns asking each other questions:

Am I an animal? Yes!
Am I big or small? Tall!
Where do I live? In Africa!



Conversation starters

Choose some of the attached conversation starters and encourage your child to not only answer, but also to **ask** the rest of the group/class/family. You could encourage them to write the answers down and report back to you: "So tell me, would your sister rather go to space or to the bottom of the ocean?"

Point out shared interests, e.g. "Look, you and Jimmy both like Lego! Why don't you ask him what Lego set he has built recently?"

Looking for social cues

Support your child in developing an understanding of others' feelings and thoughts and reading social cues. These are very subtle and your child will need a lot of practice with this.

Ways to help them:

Read a story or watch a movie or short film together and pause after a few minutes to reflect on the following questions:

- Who is in the story?
- How are they feeling?
- What do they want?
- How can you tell?
- What do you think they might do next?
- If that was you, what would you do?



Emotions, emotions, emotions

Being aware of, and in touch with their emotions is a skill that will support children throughout their lives and across different situations. It is particularly important when it comes to building resilience and supporting mental health.

Emotional regulation refers to all the things we do to bring us back to a calm, happy and 'ready to learn' state. Support your child in understanding and regulating their emotions by:

- Together with your child, build a visual representation of strategies that help them when they are feeling angry, sad, or overexcited. Make this visual, e.g. draw it together or use a symbol making app.
- Let your child try different strategies in a calm environment.
- Take time every day to talk about everyone's feelings, e.g. you could run a daily check-in where the group/family takes turns saying how they feel and why.
- **Prepare** your child when you know a challenging situation is coming up. Talk to your child about how they might feel in the situation and what they can do to help themselves.
- **Debrief** with your child after your child experiences big emotions and once they have calmed down. Talk to them about how they were feeling, why they felt like that and what they can do next time to help themselves (see example above).

